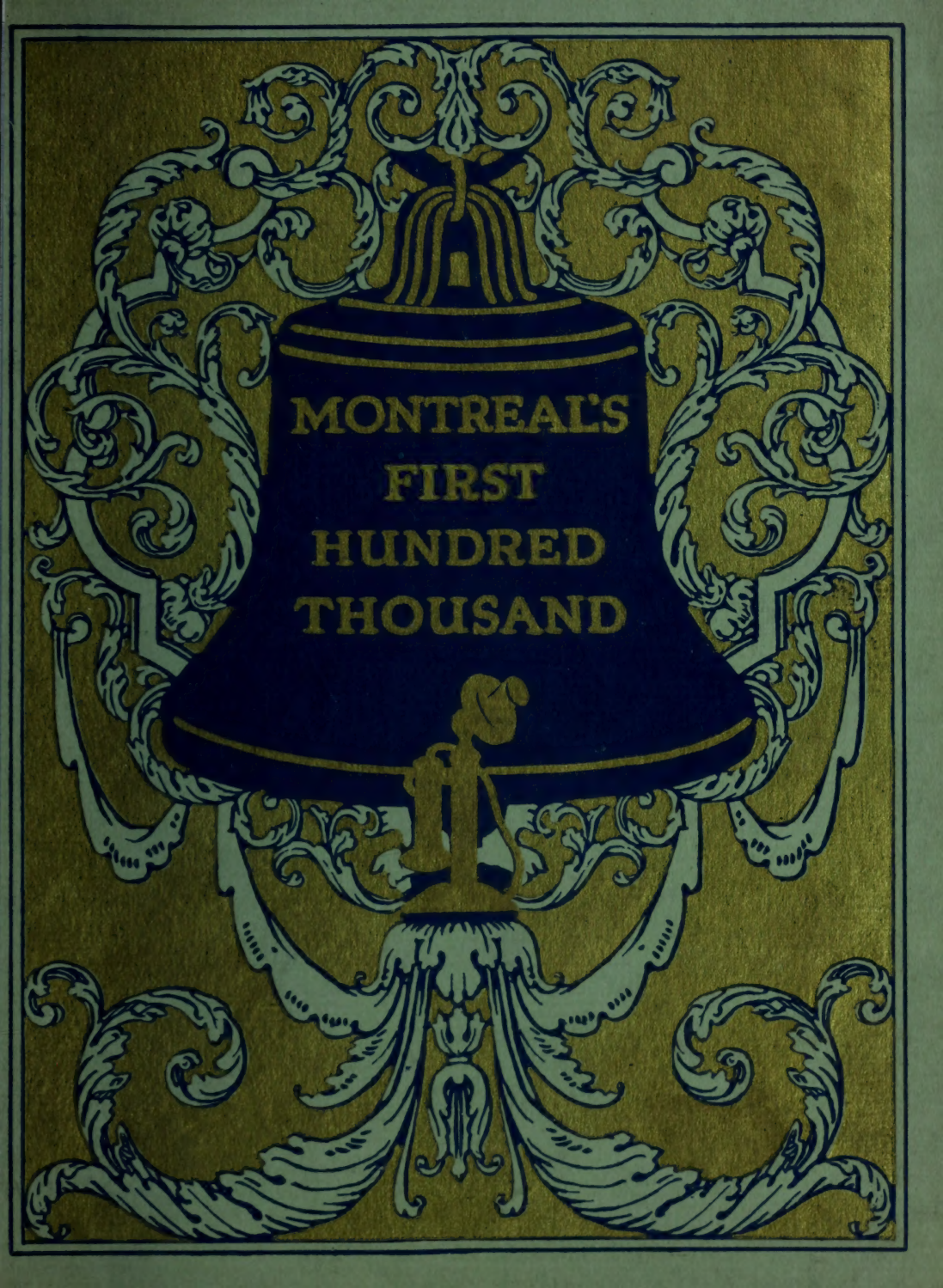
MONTREAL'S
FIRST
HUNDRED
THOUSAND

LP CAN PAM 1923 no.014

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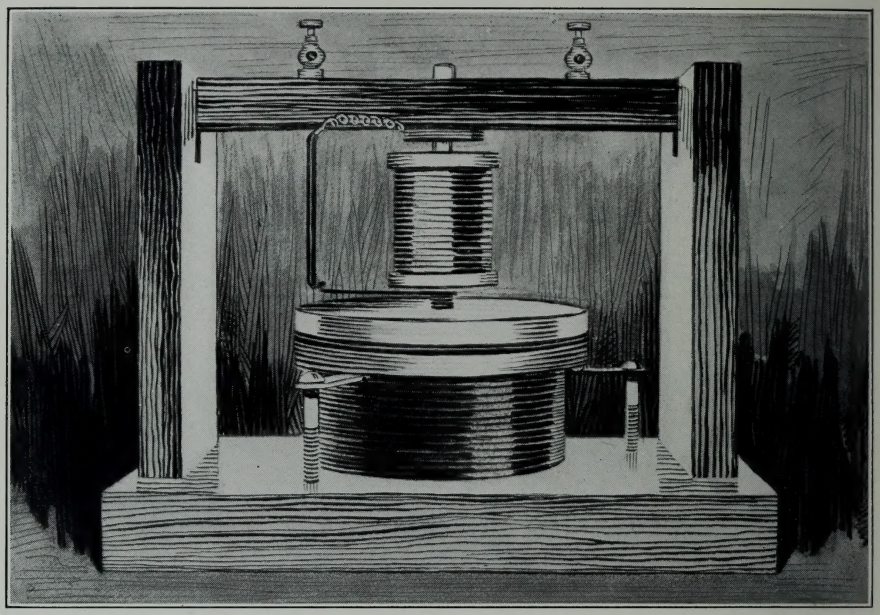
ONTARIO CANADA

Montreal's FIRST HUNDRED THOUSAND

THE little group of less than two hundred telephones of 1880 has grown to one hundred thousand. The upstairs room at 180 St. James Street, where our first switchboard was located, has given place to eleven exchange buildings.

September · Nineteen Twenty-Three



BELL'S ORIGINAL GALLOWS-FRAME TELEPHONE

WHILE experimenting on the harmonic telegraph in 1875, Bell outlined his idea of the telephone to his associate, Thomas A. Watson, in these words:—

"If I could make a current of electricity vary in intensity precisely as the air varies in density during the production of sound, I should be able to transmit speech telegraphically."

So, by using the continuous current and by intensifying and diminishing that current just as he had foretold, Bell was able to transmit speech by means of this crude instrument.

Montreal's FIRST HUNDRED THOUSAND

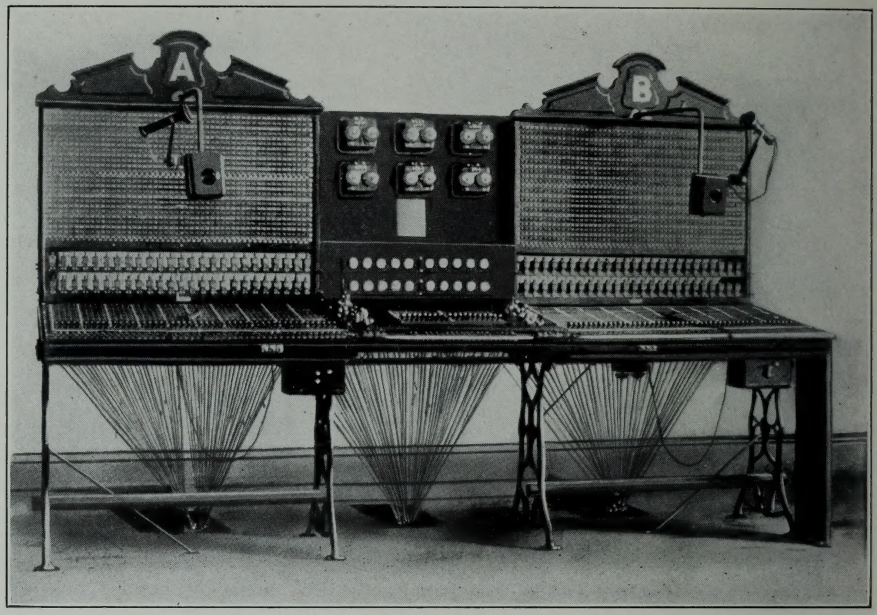
IN Montreal forty odd years ago, men's minds were turning often to a closer linking up of the city with the South Shore. A project was launched by the old South Eastern Railway for a road across the ice to Longueuil, and in January, 1880, rails were actually laid and an engine and some cars crossed the river. But a little later, the engine broke through and was lost, and so the scheme was abandoned.

Had the men of that day but known it, an idea had already been born in the mind of a much-derided dreamer which was to result in the greatest linking-up agent of all time. It was to make a neighborhood of a nation, bringing within easy speaking distance communities sundered by rivers, lakes, plains and mountains, setting the bounds of communication wider and wider.

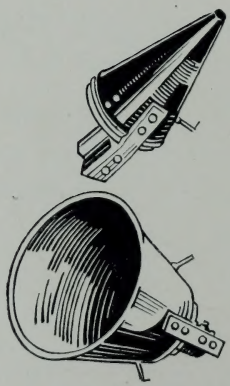
Bell's Vision of the Future

Was ever a more remarkable prophecy made than that of Alexander Graham Bell in March, 1878? Addressing a group of British capitalists—and this before the telephone had made any real progress—he said:—

"It is conceivable that cables of telephone wires could be laid underground, or suspended overhead communicating by branch wires with private dwellings, country houses, shops, manufactories, etc., etc., uniting them through the main cable with a central office where the wire could be connected as desired, establishing direct communication between any two places in the city. Such a plan as this will, I firmly believe, be the outcome



An early type of Switchboard

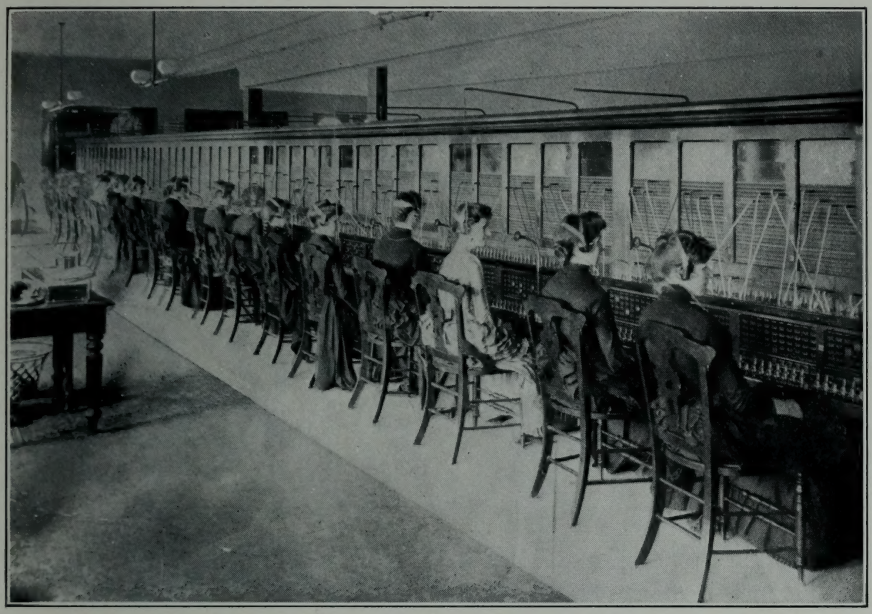


Telephones patented by Dr. Bell—1876

of the introduction of the telephone to the public. Not only so, but I believe in the future, wires will unite the head offices of the Telephone Company in different cities, and a man in one part of the country may communicate by word of mouth with another in a different place. Believing as I do that such a scheme will be the ultimate result of the telephone to the public, I will impress upon you all the advisability of keeping this end in view, that all arrangements of the telephone may be eventually realized in this grand system."

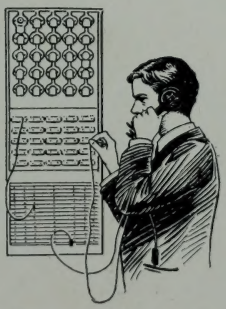
Fulfilment

How well the telephone system of Montreal today vindicates the judgment of the great inventor! Here we have



Montreal "Main" thirty-five years ago

268,000 miles of wire serving the city's 100,000 telephones. Two hundred and twenty-eight thousand miles of this wire are laid underground as Bell predicted would be possible. Fifty-six thousand telephones are in the private dwellings that Bell prophesied would be thus served, while the remaining 44,000 equip "the shops and manufactories" of Canada's metropolis. Moreover, as Bell's vision foresaw, telephone wires do unite the head offices of the telephone company in different cities, and a man in one part of



Type of Switchboard 1881

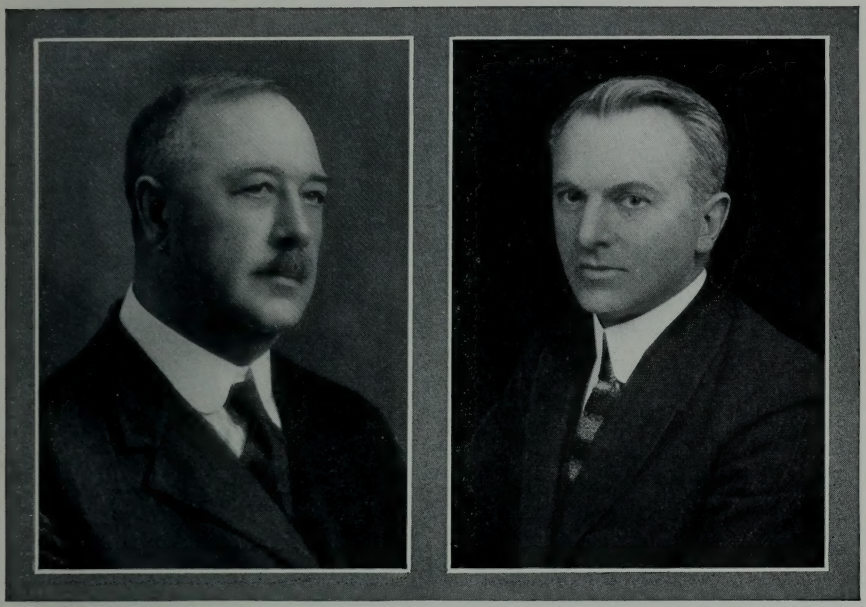
W. H. SCOTT,
Manager, 1880-1897

The late D. C. DEWAR
Manager, 1897-1906

the country may in very truth communicate by word of mouth with another in a different place.

Early Telephone Days in Montreal

The top floor of the present City and District Savings Bank at 180 St. James Street was the home of the first Bell Telephone exchange in Montreal. Here in 1880, a primitive switchboard of what was known as the Gilliland type was sufficient to serve the subscribers whose lines had been taken over by the newly organized Bell Telephone Company of Canada from the Montreal Telegraph Company and the Dominion Telegraph Co. In 1886, these premises were abandoned and a new exchange opened in the British Empire Building at the corner of Notre Dame West and St. Francois Xavier streets.



R. F. JONES
Manager, 1906-1915

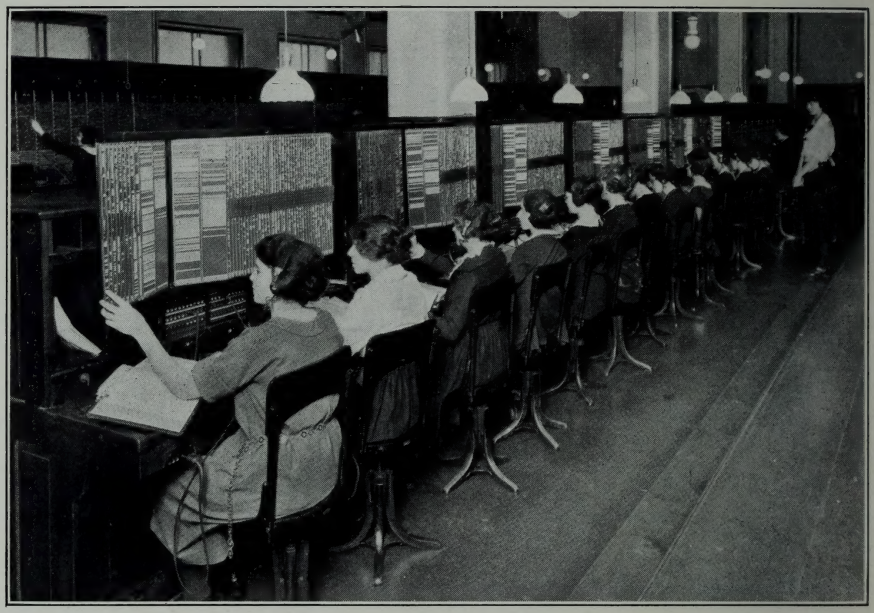
F. G. WEBBER
Manager since 1915

A switchboard with a capacity of some 2,000 lines was installed here.

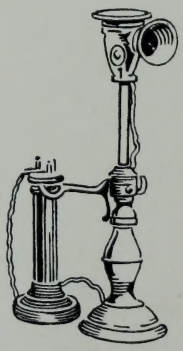
The Uptown district was not slow to see the advantage of so useful a service, and in January, 1888, an exchange known as "West" was opened in a small store in the Queen's Hall block, with about 300 lines in service.

Then in 1890 came a "South" exchange, on the south side of Notre Dame St. West, near Seigneurs, followed by a second exchange in the British Empire Building called "Annex," which served to relieve the overcrowded *Main* switchboard in the same building.

The demand from the East end soon led to the opening of the first "East" Exchange, in the rear of the store of a well-known herbalist, at the south-west corner of St. Christophe



"Information"—Main Exchange



Desk Telephone
1886

and St. Catherine Streets. This was in 1888.

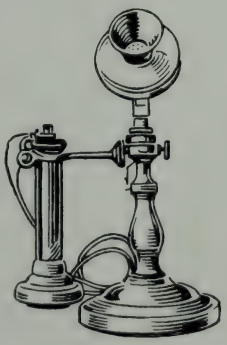
The First Underground

It was not until 1891 that the first underground conduit was laid. It extended along St. Catherine Street, from the corner of Mountain to St. Christophe. This early conduit consisted of wooden blocks treated with creosote and with a three-inch hole bored through them. They were found to be in a perfect state of preservation when replaced many years later by the modern type of underground conduit.

A typical present-day operating room

Trouble From Electric Railway

Up to 1892 all subscribers' telephones were on the single wire system which used the earth for the return current to complete the circuit. When the electric street railway began operations, the current from its wires escaping through the earth made the telephone lines so noisy as to make conversation at certain hours almost impossible. It therefore became necessary immediately to reconstruct the entire system, installing the present type of metallic circuit by which each subscriber's



Desk Telephone
1898

telephone utilizes a pair of wires from the central switchboard.

The First Prefixes

Prior to August, 1898, no central office prefixes such as "Main," "Uptown," etc., were used by subscribers in calling numbers. Up to this time it had been possible to assign to each exchange a group of numbers within which all the lines connected to that exchange would fall. Thus the number called by a subscriber would at once indicate to the operator the central office to which it was connected.

The limitations of this method were soon reached as the system grew. On August 22nd, 1898, the use of prefixes in calling numbers was begun, and the central offices then in service were assigned the names "Main," "East," "Uptown," "Westmount" and "South."

Expansion

The countless improvements necessary to keep Montreal's telephone system abreast of successive developments of the telephone art cannot be detailed here. They were for the most part technical, and although involving the expenditure of large sums of money, they went on behind the scenes and were reflected chiefly in improved and ever-expanding service to the community. Old premises were continually being vacated for larger quarters, and soon the necessity for housing complex and costly equipment in substantial fireproof buildings became evident. One by one the handsome structures that are now recognized landmarks in the city's commercial and residential areas came into being. The dates of their completion may be of some interest. The present "Main" was first occupied in August, 1897; "East" in March, 1905; "Uptown" in June, 1907; "Westmount," July, 1908; "St. Louis," August, 1909; "La-

Salle," February, 1912; "Victoria," July, 1913; "Rockland," February, 1914; "Calumet," March, 1920; "Melrose," July, 1917; "Plateau," January, 1921.

Statistics

Of Montreal's 100,000 telephones, 44,000 are in business, and 56,000 in residence premises.

Over 2,000 operators are required to handle the City's telephone traffic.

More than 950,000 calls are completed in the city daily, of which 630,000 are trunked between central offices.

During the busiest hour of the business day 86,000 calls are completed.

Upwards of 4,400 long-distance calls originate in Montreal each day, and there are over 8,100 incoming calls.

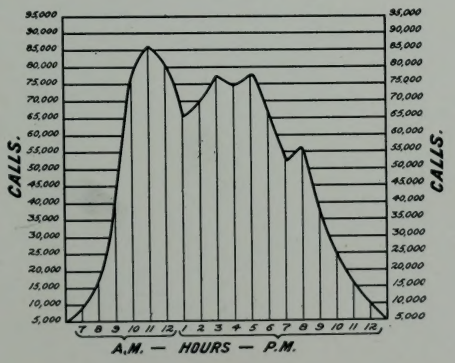
Two hundred and twenty-five long-distance circuits terminate at our Montreal switchboard.

Montreal has 268,578 miles of telephone wire, 228,268 miles of which—85 per cent —are underground.

The replacement value of telephone plant in Montreal is upwards of twenty-two million dollars.

Bell Telephone engineers estimate that five years hence (1928) Montreal will have 175,000 telephones in service.

The Rise and Fall of the Telephone Tide



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